

SANDWELL COLLEGE

**Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting
held on Monday 11 March 2024 at 4.00pm
Sandwell College**

Present: A Taylor (Independent) (Chair)
 N Anhu (Staff Governor, Sandwell)
 M Ashford (Independent)
 G Pennington (Principal)
 S Powell (Staff Governor, Cadbury)
 T Sharma (Independent)
 J Tew (Independent)
 M J Uddin (Independent) (Part)

Apologies: R Bearman (Independent)
 T Kaur (Student Governor, Sandwell)
 S Lal (Independent)
 N Makin (Independent)

Also in attendance:

R Pickup Executive Director, Finance & Resources
B Beaty Executive Director, HR and Organisational Development
S Griffiths Director of Strategy and Projects
D Holden Vice Principal, Curriculum
M McNeill Observer, Reviewer, External Governance Review
E Scotford Clerk to the Corporation
J Stevens Vice Principal, Quality

		Action
B24.1	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>	
1.2	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Richard Bearman, Taranpreet Kaur, Shokat Lal and Neil Makin.	
1.2	RESOLVED THAT: apologies were approved by Governors.	
B24.2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest beyond the standing register of interests.	
B24.3	<u>Minutes – Search & Governance Committee – 5 February 2024</u>	
	The meeting had received and discussed: an ETF update; Board and committee vacancies and upcoming ends of terms of office; Governor recruitment to vacancies; External Governance Review (EGR) progress to date.	
B24.4	<u>Board membership</u>	
	The Search & Governance Committee had met with the candidates and explained each individual's background and the skills and experience they would bring to the Board. The skills and EDI needs of the Board were taken into account in considering in the appointments.	

4.1	Alison Cope – Independent Governor	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the appointment on a 3-year term of office of Alison Cope as Independent Governor. Committee membership to be determined in due course.	
4.2	Natalie Edwards-Yesufu – Independent Governor	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the appointment on a 3-year term of office of Natalie Edwards-Yesufu as Independent Governor. Committee membership to be determined in due course.	
4.3	Harpinder Singh – Independent Governor	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the appointment on a 3-year term of office of Harpinder Singh as Independent Governor and member of the LQCC.	
4.4	Sonia Smalling – Independent Governor	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the appointment on a 3-year term of office of Sonia Smalling as Independent Governor and member of the Search & Governance Committee.	
4.5	Student Governor – Cadbury	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors confirmed the appointment of: Bilal Lok-Shun Hussain as Student Governor, Cadbury, until 31 July 2024.	
B24.5	<u>Minutes of the Board of Governors held on 4 December 2023</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 December 2023 which were signed by the Chair.	
B24.6	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
6.1	Minute No. B23.74.2 – Co Vice Chair of the Corporation – Governor volunteers were encouraged given the end of John Tew's term of office in March 2025 – outstanding, Governors reminded.	Govs
6.2	Minute No. B23.74.5.3 – A Governor had a potential interested party to contact. Clerk to provide copy of the information pack – actioned but the party was not able to pursue an interest at this time.	
6.3	Minute No. B23.78.9 – Governors asked for the quality assurance activity to be explored in more detail by the LQCC – actioned.	
6.4	Minute No. B23.89.2.3 – Clerk to arrange suitable date for refresher training on safeguarding, quality and finance – actioned.	
6.5	Minute No. B23.89.2.6 – Clerk to arrange free trial of Governor Hub – actioned. Governor Hub had been well received by Governors who were finding it useful and easy to navigate and were supportive of its continuation.	
6.6	Minute No. B23.90.1.1 – JT to report back to the March Board meeting on progress on environmental sustainability – actioned.	

B24.7	<u>Governor feedback</u>	
7.1	<u>Link Governors update</u>	
	All Governors confirmed they had had an update meeting with their Link Head of Department. Individual verbal feedback on matters discussed was given on link visits to Health & Social Care; Supported Learning; ESOL Adult; Sport; Automotive and Engineering.	
	JU left the meeting	
7.2	<u>Governors' engagement</u>	
	Get Connected – Thursday 7 March 2024 – Governors attending the breakfast networking event highlighted it was a useful platform to connect with the business community.	
B24.8	<u>Principal's Report</u>	
	Key points were highlighted.	
8.1	Recruitment had been strong with over 7000 students and was likely to be nearer 7200 by the end of the year after the next recruitment round. The College would receive additional in-year funding for 50% of the growth of 400 students which equated to £1.6m. The full allocation would be received next year. More vocational applications had been received, partly as a result of changes to formally assessed exams and grade boundaries which led students to explore other options outside academic pathways. Central St Michael's and Cadbury student numbers remained strong.	
8.2	The College was in a positive position and continued to extend its reach and brand with specific targeted campaigns in areas of focus.	
8.3	<p>An area of concern was BCC's financial cuts, particularly relating to transport for young people. Many of the College's students received subsidised travel at a cost to the College which would have a knock-on effect if the LA cut its support.</p> <p>Governors recognised that some students including apprentices did not receive travel subsidies which was an area the College was trying to address.</p> <p>The College suggested the Board consider writing to BCC to explain how detrimental its plans were to young people so that the issue maintained a high profile.</p> <p>Governors asked how many students would be affected and which areas they came from.</p> <p>The College advised that 1500 students passed from Birmingham into Sandwell and Cadbury some of whom would be impacted. Some were subsidised through Learner Support Funds.</p> <p>Governors suggested keeping a watching brief on the situation until the financial decisions of BCC had had time to settle.</p> <p>Governors pointed out the need to be specific about the number of students affected and financial impact at such time that the letter was prepared.</p>	

	<p>The Principal and Vice Principal, Quality, were members of the Strategic Board for Birmingham which included the Director of Children's Services who would be able to advise who best to direct the letter to. The LA's own data would demonstrate how the College's students travel and where they travel from.</p>	
8.4	<p>Governors asked what was the likely wider impact of the BCC situation given they would be financially troubled for years.</p> <p>The College explained that Disadvantaged students were likely to be affected along with wraparound service care leavers and LAC.</p>	
8.5	<p>Governors asked if there might be opportunities for any partnership opportunities between the College and BCC given the LA's financial situation.</p> <p>The College acknowledged this was a useful suggestion which it would look to pursue. The LA might be more receptive to such an arrangement than it had been in the past. Initial potential opportunities were: the Brass House adult education centre and the MAC performing arts and creative building.</p>	Princ/SLT
8.6	<p>16-18 remained the largest area of the student cohort with a 2024/25 funded number of 7254 students.</p> <p>The College had worked hard to prepare for the defunding of BTECs. It was easier to find work placements for some areas than others. It was unclear what would replace the qualifications in some areas at present. An estimated 900 students would not have a pathway. The College intended to scrutinise the student cohort to identify exactly which students would be affected by a lack of route and funding so that the action plan could be adapted accordingly.</p> <p>Governors were surprised other colleges had not drilled down into the detail in the same way.</p> <p>The College advised it was more affected by volume as it had as many L3 learners.</p>	
8.7	<p>Figures remained challenging for adults and apprenticeships which were areas of focus.</p> <p>The adult education budget was capped whereas 16-18 demand was student-led. It was important to assess if the business case met the LA's skills plans.</p>	
8.8	<p>The Apprenticeship team had been reorganised which had led to improvements. Apprenticeships would generate £1.8m this year. This opportunity for young people and adults needed to be grown. Ian Smith, Consultant, had been tasked with producing a review for the LQCC.</p>	
8.9	<p>The College SAR was now complete and had been scrutinised by the LQCC.</p>	
8.10	<p>The financial position remained strong, assisted by the additional in-year funding for the extra students recruited. Good control of group size led to staff efficiency. This was reflected in the ESFA budget allocation which last year was £42 million compared to this year's £51 million.</p>	
8.11	<p>Capital developments were summarised. The new learning centre at Cradley Heath was in the contracting phase, with funding in place and contract to be signed off. NHS Smethwick – the College was not the lead partner but a strategic partner with the NHS. The College was</p>	

	<p>negotiating for 200 work placements against the NHS's request to increase the rental payments. The matter was reconcilable but there was more work to do. The Principal would report back to the next meeting.</p> <p>Capital funds to improve the estate had been received with plans to spend at Cadbury and Central Campus, with a broad outline in place for other areas for sign off by the DfE. Any additional money would be earmarked for Cadbury as other schemes underspent. Terry Duffy House had now been sold to an alternative buyer so an alternative plan to increase space was to instal a modular building on spare land at the Engineering Centre site. Proposals were being drawn up.</p> <p>The official opening of the new Engineering Centre was scheduled for 19 March 2024. Governors were welcome to attend.</p>	Principal
8.12	<p>Governors asked if the College might be impacted by the opening of Birmingham City College A level Centre.</p> <p>The College advised that it was too early to judge. Other local colleges might be impacted more, in combination with the transport issue. The evidence so far was it was not having much impact: Cadbury application numbers were good and acceptances were up on last year. Central St Michael's (CSM) had a particular atmosphere for independent learning. The College publicised CSM as an opportunity to progress to university and other pathways.</p>	
8.13	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the Principal's report.	
B24.9	<u>Annual Accountability Agreement</u>	
9.1	It was a statutory requirement for colleges to publish an Annual Accountability Agreement. The first edition was released last year. Suggested revisions for this year's edition following DfE guidance were presented for Governors' attention and related to the addition of a new 'purpose' section, data updates and greater detail relating to deprivation; inclusion of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and capital investments information.	
9.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors considered and accepted the proposed changes to the Annual Accountability Agreement.	
B24.10	<u>Minutes of the LQCC meeting held on 24 January 2024</u>	
	Neil Makin was now interim Committee Chair and John Tew had joined the Committee. The meeting had received and discussed: a presentation by the Programme Achievement Managers (PAMs); GCSE results – English and Maths results compared well to other colleges; the draft college SAR and QIP; a quality update including term 1 student survey and half yearly report on observations of teaching and learning; a safeguarding update, the Committee's responsibilities in the Risk Register; the annual EDI report.	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the minutes of the LQCC meeting.	
10.1	College SAR summary and QIP	
10.1.1	The details of the College Self Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) were outlined. Most of the strengths and development areas in the SAR were backed up by the Ofsted report.	
10.1.2	Copies of the complete SAR and QIP would be put on Governor Hub.	

10.1.3	Governors asked how the College looked at performance by protected characteristics and was it disproportionate. The College explained that this was covered by the annual EDI report which analysed achievement by different categories. There were National Averages (NAs) for every category. The College exceeded all NAs but some groups across the College were performing better than others. The group performing least well was 16-18 white males. A specific action plan was in place for that group.	
10.1.4	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the College SAR as recommended by LQCC. Governors ratified oversight of the QIP as recommended by LQCC.	
10.2	T levels update	
10.2.1	The College continued to prepare for the potential impact of curriculum reform. It was acknowledged this might be affected by a change of government. It was working to ensure students had the routes they needed. The T level action plan would be reviewed in detail at LQCC.	
10.2.2	Governors asked if the College was considering building a safety net for those students who did not meet the grade. The College confirmed that this was work in progress. Many colleges did not have the same volume of L3 students. The College had drilled down into what qualifications they could do.	
10.2.3	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the T levels update.	
B24.11	<u>Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 20 February 2024</u>	
11.1	The Committee had considered and discussed: internal audit reports on business continuity processes, learner number systems, IAS progress report, FE benchmarking report, FSA FE/HE Digest Spring 2024, health and safety update, risk register, annual insurance cover report, policies – risk management, business continuity plan and IT disaster recovery plan, health and safety; appointment process for IAS from 2204; progress on the College’s environmental sustainability strategy.	
11.2	Governors asked what changes were likely in the new financial handbook. The College advised that it would probably substantiate existing points rather than add new items.	
11.3	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting.	
11.4	<u>Policies/documents</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the following policies on the recommendation of the Audit Committee:	
11.4.1	Risk Management	
11.4.2	Business Continuity Plan	
11.4.3	Health & Safety	

	Staff Governors left the meeting	
	<u>**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**</u>	
B24.12 NFP		
B24.13 NFP		
B24.14 NFP		
U24.15 NFP		
U24.16 NFP		
U24.17 NFP		
U24.18 NFP		
U24.19 NFP		
	The Principal, SLT and Martin McNeill, Reviewer, left the meeting	
	<u>**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**</u>	
B24.20 NFP		
B24.21	<u>Any Other Business</u>	
	There was no other business.	
B24.22	<u>Determination of Confidential items</u>	
	B24.12 – B24.13	
B24.23	<u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u>	
	Annual Strategy Forum – Friday 10 May 2024, 11.00am Board Meeting – Monday 1 July 2024, 4.00pm	

Meeting ended at 7.15pm