

West Lothian College

21 September 2021

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minute of Meeting of the Board Governors held on **Tuesday 29 June** at 4.30pm via Zoom

Present: Alex Linkston (Chair)
Sue Cook (Vice Chair)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal & Chief Executive)
Simon Ashpool
Kirsti Clark
Jinty Dobson
Frank Gribben
Lynne Hollis
Iain McIntosh
Colin Miller
Richard Lockhart
Elaine Cook
Moirra Niven
Neil Sinclair

In Attendance : Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Services)
Paula White (Head of Estates and Sustainability) – Item 9
Lesley Aitkenhead (Board Governance Advisor)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Tom Bates and Julia Simpson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no other declarations of interest.

3. Minute of Meeting of 9 March 2021

The Minute of the meeting of the Board of Governors of 9 March 2021 was approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 9 March 2021

All actions from the minute of meeting of 9 March 2021 were noted as duly completed or on track.

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5. Chief Executive's Report

The Principal highlighted the tremendous effort from staff and students, which was celebrated in the Celebrating Success event, which was attended by members of the Board.

The Principal advised that the Chief Executive's Report has been structured to align with the 4 college's strategic goals, to provide the Board with greater insight on progress.

The Principal highlighted the level of Quality Assurance activities, including the positive feedback and unconditional accreditation from the General Teaching Council Scotland as part of the revalidation review. Education Scotland also acknowledged good practice from the college in its recent national review of blended learning in colleges.

The Principal noted the positive impact on both the staff and Board Members from staff attendance at Board pre-meetings and agreed that this should continue. It was agreed that pre-committee staff events should be offered to all Board Members, as part of a calendar of events.

The Principal noted the Scottish Funding Council Report, which was issued 29 June 2021, and has wide reaching implications, including a recommendation to move to multi-year funding. The Principal will review the report and summarise the main points for Board members.

The Board shared comments raised by the Chief Executive of the College Development Network (CDN) stating that West Lothian College is viewed as 'dynamic and creative'.

Members noted the Chief Executive's Report.

6. Regional Chair's Feedback

The Chair updated the committee on the Scottish Funding Council review and the leadership workshops set up to raise the profile of Colleges in Scotland, including Statement of Ambition, Governance and the Pay Review process.

The Chair acknowledged the positive attitude and 'buzz' about the college, which was witnessed in a recent visit to the site and from attending the Celebrating Success event.

7. Student Association Report

Members noted the report from the student association and commented on the quality and insight provided, particularly from the case studies.

The Student Association advised the Board that the Association received a Runners Up Award for the Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (SPARQs) for the work on equalities, diversity and inclusion. The Board welcomed this news and celebrated the work of the Student Association.

The Board noted the report and thanked the Student Association for the quality of the report and update, including the development of a strategic framework.

8. Colleges Scotland Review of Statement of Ambition

The Chair presented the Statement of Ambition Review for discussion. It was noted that the review was produced by one of the workstreams involved in the Colleges Scotland review, funded by the Scottish Funding Council.

The Chair advised that colleges were being asked for feedback by 30 June 2021, and the Principal has prepared a summary of the key points of feedback.

The Board shared views on the review and asked that the comments were included in the response to Colleges Scotland, these included:

- The report was overly wordy, with many vague statements.
- The report should include clear mechanisms for measuring success
- The report should use less jargon
- The report includes open ended statements referring to 'meeting all learning needs' which would be difficult to meet without setting clear expectations.
- The report should include case studies which will bring the content to life and give a real sense of purpose and ambition.

The Principal and Chair agreed with the comments and advised that feedback was being collated and sent, as this was an important document.

Action 1: Principal to include feedback in response to Statement of Ambition and share with Board Members.

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9. Five-Year Estates Plan

The Head of Estates and Sustainability was welcomed and gave a presentation on the ongoing work and future plans for the College Estates. This work is aimed at transforming the campus to create more flexible learning spaces.

The board welcomed the work and noted that the decision to create a Hair & Beauty Workspace on the ground floor was reflected a positive vision for the college.

The board welcomed the plans to create positive spaces for students to 'dwell', encouraging them to spend more informal time on college premises, maximising student engagement.

The board also noted the need to consider Carbon Neutral plans and a Board Member offered to share insights on Zero Public Buildings Standards for consideration. The board thanked the presenter.

10. Strategic Risk Register

The Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Services presented the updated Strategic Risk Register for discussion. The board were advised that this reflects all of the risks, which were discussed at each of the committees, with the exception of the Board specific risks.

The Chair asked the board to confirm agreement to the risks and mitigating actions for the board specific risks 1.1 and 1.2, which was confirmed.

The Chair asked each of the committee chairs to confirm agreement to the risks presented at each committee and it was confirmed that all the risks were considered to be a fair reflection of the current risk profile for 2021, and the mitigation was appropriate. The Strategic Risk Register report was noted.

11. Board Development

The Board Governance Advisor presented three items for discussion:

(i) Update on the Board Strategy Day

The Board Strategy Day on 6 May covered two main topics – Cyber Security and Diversity, and all actions are included in the Board Development Plan.

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(ii) Board Self Effectiveness Evaluation

The Board Governance Advisor presented the final copy of the Board Self Effectiveness Evaluation for discussion. The board noted the report as an accurate reflection of the self-assessment, and the actions are included in the Board Development Plan.

(iii) Board Development Plan

The Board Governance Advisor presented an updated Board Development Plan, stating that the plan will be a continuous process of development, and will include actions identified as part of Board Members 121's or from internal or external reviews. It will be kept updated, using SMART actions and included in future board meetings for oversight. The board noted the plan and approach.

12. Annual Review of Committee Remits

The Board Governance Advisor presented the annual review of the Board Committee remits for approval. The presenter advised that there were no material changes to the current remits as the design of the current governance structure is considered effective, and the committees are operating effectively.

The presenter advised that there were some changes to the format of the remits of Nominations Committee and Remuneration Committee to align with the other remits.

The board asked about the reference to the Nominations Committee – “ensure sound corporate governance and the proper conduct of the Committees operations;” and whether this was the responsibility of the Board. It was agreed that it was the responsibility of the Board to provide oversight of corporate governance, but this item related specifically to the conduct of committee members, in terms of their duty of care as board members. It was a delegated responsibility to the nominations committee which has responsibility to provide oversight and escalate any issues to the Board.

Action 2: The Board Governance Advisor will review the wording of the remit of the Nominations Committee to make the responsibility clearer.

Committee Business.

13. Finance and General Purposes Committee: Update from the Chair of the Finance & General Purpose Committee from 17 June 2021.

The presentation by the Student Support Staff was noted as a highlight of the Committee, sharing the passion and insight of the work that the team undertake.

The committee noted an overall positive year, in terms of financial plans staff performance and recommended the following reports for approval by the board:

- (i) Annual Budget 2021-22 (including FFR)**
- (ii) Financial Regulations**

The Board approved the Annual Budget 2021-22, Financial Regulations and also the Financial Forecast Return for 2021-22, which was presented as a late paper to the board.

The committee noted the complaints report, infrastructure update and welcomed the five-year estate plan and recommended approval of minor changes to the Accounting Policies for approval by the Audit Committee.

14. Audit Committee: Update from the Chair of the Audit Committee from 24 June 2021.

The presentation by the Construction Team was noted as a highlight of the Committee, sharing the passion and insight of the work that the team undertake.

A presentation from the Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure was welcomed and provided opportunity to consider the work to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation.

The committee approved the renewal of the current Internal Audit contract but agreed it would be last renewal, to ensure it remains independent.

The committee also approved minor changes to the Financial Regulations, which was noted as consistent with the college sector. The committee welcomed presentations by the external audit team on the audits completed on Core Financial Systems and Business Continuity and discussed changes to disaster recovery plans. The committee noted that the information presented at the committee enabled a more informed discussion on the Strategic Risk Register, and agreed that

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the changes in risk profile and mitigation were consistent with the updates to the committee.

The committee noted the update on Health & Safety and commented on the reduction on incidents as students were not on site.

The board raised a question around the mental health and wellbeing of students who are working at home and whether the college had any means of monitoring any issues that were unreported. The Principal advised that a report on the work of the Student Support Team was presented to the L&T Committee which gave insight on the work to support students who are struggling with poor mental health.

15. Learning and Teaching Committee: Update from Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee from 16 June 2021

The presentation by the Beauty Therapy Team was noted as a highlight, enabling committee members to have direct access to staff and students working in the Beauty Therapy Area. The committee noted the quality and insight provided by the Equality and Mainstreaming report and also highlighted the use of external sources of validation, as a positive approach to providing added assurance.

The committee approved the following reports:

- (i) **Curriculum Plan**
- (ii) **Equality & Mainstreaming Report**

The committee noted the papers on good progress against Outcome Agreement targets. An action of note was to respond to the Government on the approach taken by certain Universities that had a negative impact on college students, and has potential future implications.

16. Remuneration Committee: Update from Chair of Remuneration Committee from 6 May 2021

The committee confirmed approval of the annual cost of living pay awards for the Principal and Vice Principal, in line with the nationally agreed deal agreed for support staff.

17. Nominations Committee: Update from Chair of Nominations Committee from 29 June 2021

A Chair advised that a meeting was held before the board to discuss recent resignations of Simon Ashpool and Jeremy Miles, who have regrettably identified a conflict, following changes to their working arrangements.

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It was noted that neither member was asked to leave or wanted to leave and both had valued their time on the Board. However, circumstances had compelled the resignations. The Chair noted that the Nominations Committee discussed and agreed plans for recruitment and needed to consider skills as well as balance of gender and ethnic diversity.

The Board Governance Advisor advised that Board members will be asked to complete a more detailed skills matrix, to gain further insight on available skills and gaps, for purposes of recruitment and succession planning.

The Chair thanked Simon Ashpool for his contribution to the Board and the college and the board wished him every success in his new role.

18. AOB

There was no additional business noted.

19. Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers, Development Needs

The Board of Governors were comfortable with the meeting and supporting papers presented.

20. Date of Next Meeting

21 September at 4.30pm via Zoom