

St Helens College

GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held at the Town Centre Campus, St Helens Thursday 27 January 2022 at 4.00pm

Present:	Bill Nixon (Chair)	External Governor
	Simon Pierce	Chief Executive/Principal
	Nick Shore	External Governor (via Teams)
	David Balsamo	External Governor (via Teams)
	Alison Cannon	External Governor
	Phil Han	External Governor
	Debbie Calderbank	External Governor (via Teams)
	Sophie Littlewood	External Governor (via Teams)
	Liz Duncan	External Governor
	Andrew Lang	External Governor (via Teams)
	Julie Heap	Staff Governor
	John Heritage	External Governor (via Teams)
	Benjamin Bennett-Stanley	Staff Governor (via Teams)
	Alicja Gwiazda-Treska	Student Governor
In attendance:	Rav Garcha	Chief Financial Officer
	Mark Doyle	Deputy Principal - Curriculum and Quality
	Gillian Hayhurst	Governance Director (minutes)

The meeting opened at 4.01pm. The Chair welcomed the new Governance Director who set out their priorities for the first six months.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alun Owen, Jim Pinsent and Zulakha Desai.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

3 Strategic Plan 2022-25

The Governing Board was presented with the draft College Strategic Plan 2022-25 for consideration.

The Chief Executive Officer/Principal (Principal) set the context for the discussion, which follows on from the strategic away day discussions in November 2021. The draft plan addresses the points of emphasis requested by

the board at that time, including its commitment to developing its offer at Knowsley. The board acknowledged the hard work of the Marketing Team to produce the document.

The Governing Board considered the six strategic goals and associated taglines and commitment statements.

Outstanding student experience

Regarding tailored and holistic support, the board discussed the reference to disadvantaged and vulnerable students and whether it is clear that this approach will be taken more widely with all students. The board noted that the College receives additional funding for disadvantaged and vulnerable students and there is a requirement to demonstrate the targeted use of these funds. Following discussion, it was agreed that the wording is clear that the offer is to all students.

The board requested that additional emphasis is put on the College supporting students to achieve good outcomes.

The board considered the accessibility of the language used in this section. It was agreed to replace the word 'pedagogy' with reference to 'teaching'.

Exceptional curriculum

The board was in unanimous support of developing the College's offer, particularly for levels 4-7 and more broadly at the Knowsley Campus.

The board requested additional text is included to clarify the commitment to providing a sense of belonging.

Regarding net zero and sustainability, the board noted that this is a cross-cutting theme that extends beyond the College's Estates Strategy. Ofsted is clear that the curriculum is no longer a prescribed approach and colleges should use the flexibility to introduce themes like sustainability and equality and diversity across all learning.

Growth

The board considered the move from representing financial sustainability and resilience as a standalone strategic aim, as with the current plan, to its inclusion under 'growth'. The College has seen a huge improvement in its financial position since the previous strategic plan was implemented and governors supported this change of approach.

The Governing Board welcomed specific reference to Waterside Training.

The board requested that the 'growth' tagline be reviewed to consider whether there is enough emphasis on partnering with other Higher Education institutions.

Transformed estate

The Governing Board queried the commitment to net zero by 2040 and whether this is achievable. This date is in line with the government's green agenda and the St Helens Climate Commission target. The date was included within the College's Estates Strategy, which the board approved in June 2021. The works planned to existing infrastructure incorporates a reduction in the College's carbon footprint. The College is appointing a Health, Safety and Environment Manager who will develop a net zero and sustainability plan for board's consideration. The board noted that although the College is at the start of developing its understanding around net zero, senior managers have engaged with companies who are leading in this area.

Employer of choice

Regarding the rebranding process, governors were advised that this is a key element to supporting positive cultural change within the College.

A discussion was held on the commitment of governors and senior leaders to operate with a high level of visibility and engagement. Staff will hold the leadership team to account for this and there was unanimous support for this commitment statement.

John Heritage joined the meeting. Ms A Gwiazda-Treska left for a brief period.

The board requested that 'reputation' is included within the tagline either as an addition or substitution for an existing term.

Anchor Institution

The board was informed that this aim was included following the strategic discussion resulting from engagement with local stakeholder.

The board queried whether the College has enough resource to deliver the commitments within this aim. It was acknowledged that most of the work in this area is undertaken by the Principal and Chief Financial Officer, however there is a commitment to a wider delegation and developing the skills of employees. The governors discussed ways that they could support the Senior Leadership Team and encouraged requests for attendance at external events. [REDACTED]

Values

Following employee consultation, seven values were presented to the board for inclusion within the strategic plan.

Six values were voted most important to the staff with innovation being included by the Principal to reflect the College's direction of travel.

The board queried whether a list of behaviours that underpin these values will be agreed and link through to the performance management system. The behaviours will be considered operationally as part of the next steps to delivering the strategic plan.

Mrs A Cannon and Mr R Garcha left the meeting for a brief period.

Mission statement

The board discussed the College's mission statement and agreed that it remains fit for purpose. It was noted that the College has developed marketing messages that link to the mission, for example "connecting classroom to career".

Next steps

The board was advised that internal and external stakeholders will be consulted on the plan and asked to provide feedback on what the commitments should look and feel like operationally. This feedback will help to inform the development of the operational plan, due to be presented to the board in March 2022. The Chair and committee chairs will support the development and scrutiny of the plan prior to the March 2022 board.

The board was presented with the College's operational People Plan, which has been developed following feedback from staff. The board supported the level of detail provided and confirmed that it was appropriate for future reporting against the strategic plan. A dashboard will be developed to show a red, amber, green rating against each commitment with exception reports provided for areas that are not considered 'green'. This dashboard may also replace some existing board and committee reports that are no longer appropriate as the College moves to a business-as-usual approach to performance management.

The board confirmed that the strategic plan reflects the ambition and aspirations of the organisation and thanked those involved for their work to develop it. The board reiterated the need to ensure appropriate resources are in place to deliver the plan and supported a review of staffing levels to address any challenges. [ACTION] The board requested a resourcing plan be presented along with the operational plan at its meeting in March 2022. Support was also given to the senior leaders to consider, and dismiss as necessary, operational activity and opportunities that arise that are outside of the College's strategic aims.

The student governor presented ideas that could be developed operationally to support students. These included offering flexibility for students to attend different classes of the same course to fit in around working shift patterns. The

College may also consider the courses it offers to extend the ambition of its students beyond those typical to the area to influence and drive change locally.

RESOLVED: **The board approved the College Strategic Plan 2022-25 subject to the agreed amendments.**

4 Any other business

There were no items of any other business.

Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Board will be held on Thursday 17 March 2022 at 4.00pm.

The meeting closed 5.35pm.