

St Helens College

GOVERNING BOARD

**Minutes from the meeting held at the Town Centre Campus, St Helens
16 May 2024 at 3.15pm**

Present:	Phil Han	External Governor
	Alison Cannon	External Governor
	Jim Pinsent	External Governor
	Liz Duncan	External Governor
	Zulakha Desai	External Governor
	Andrew Lang	External Governor
	Paul Growney	External Governor
	Natalie Ibbs	External Governor
	Simon Pierce	Chief Executive/Principal
	Tracey Turner	Staff Governor
	Jen McGill	Staff Governor
In attendance:	Stephanie Donaldson	Deputy Chief Executive
	Mohammed Ramzan	Vice Principal – Quality and Student Experience
	Philip Grant	Vice Principal - Curriculum
	Carys Bibby	Governance Director (minutes)

Governing Board members were taken on a tour of the T Level provision in Early Years, Health and Care provision by Head of School, Paul Hatton.

246 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received for John Heritage, Alun Owen and Michael Ridgeway.

247 Declarations of interest

It was noted that Stephanie is an independent member of Torus' Audit Committee for minute 251. It was agreed that this declaration did not preclude full participation in the meeting.

248 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 21 March 2024

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the action tracker updates.

250 **Performance/ exception report**

The report provided governors with a summary of progress against key performance indicators as part of the agreed approach to assurance reporting. The compliance report was also provided, along with an outline of the progress made against the College's Strategic Goals.

A short update was provided on predicted achievement. Predictions in 2022 and 2023 proved to be inaccurate so managers this year are working to triangulate evidence to ensure the robustness of predictions. This process was used to predict pass rates for January exams and technical, for which predictions were correct. Where students are not on track to achieve interventions have been put in place and the work with these students over the next three weeks will be essential to ensuring a strong achievement rate. Initial indications are that the College will achieve 81.3% overall against the target of 84%. This will be an improvement from the 74.8% achievement in 2022/23.

The Governing Board noted that the Health and Safety Manager has left the College and an interim has been appointed. The Health and Safety Link Governor gave an overview of the interim appointment and the continued oversight and assurance around health and safety.

The report included a new template for updates against the Strategic Plan. The Governing Board were content with this template which gave a more strategic and less operational update against the objectives and aims. The Governing Board queried whether the directional arrows in the template were objective. As the arrows summarise both the qualitative and quantitative data provided in the narrative, they are to an extent subjective but have been reviewed by the Executive Team. A plan for the development of a new Strategic Plan will be brought to the Governing Board meeting in July 2024.

The Governing Board queried progress with the creation of a Higher Education Strategy. The College has engaged external support to assist with the development of the Access and Participation Plan initially, and then a new Higher Education Strategy. The new Director of Apprenticeships is familiar with the conditions of the Office for Students having previously worked on higher level qualifications.

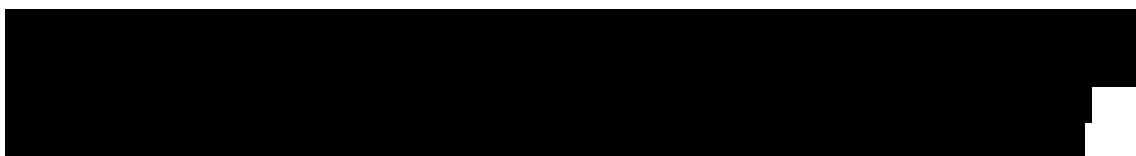
RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted progress against the high-level KPIs and targets for 2023/24.

The Governing Board noted the compliance report.

The Governing Board noted the progress against the College's Strategic Goals.

251 **Financial management report**

The report presented a general financial update and summary of the College's financial position as presented in the management accounts for the period ended 31 March 2024.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On capital expenditure, costs for the planned project to renovate the Town Centre kitchens have been received and are much higher than the agreed budget of £600k. College managers are considering whether this project is still viable.

The Governing Board agreed that the headlines table in the management accounts pack was very helpful but requested an explanation around the meaning of the movement from prior month arrows.

The budget for 2024/25 will be presented to the Governing Board at the July 2024 meeting. The management accounts indicate a tighter financial position next year due to the impact of the 6.5% pay award made in January 2024, the investment in staffing key areas such as the Quality Team and the lagged cost of introducing new 16-18 provision at Knowsley.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the report.

252 Policies

The report presented the Student Protection Plan and Student Transfer Policy for approval as recommended by the Curriculum and Quality Committee. The report also presented the Student Admissions Policy for approval and a recommendation to delay the review of the Health and Safety Policy.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board resolved to accept the recommendation of the Curriculum and Quality Committee to approve the Student Protection Plan and the Student Transfer Policy.

The Governing Board resolved to approve the Student Admissions Policy.

The Governing Board resolved to approve the continued use of the Health and Safety Policy until 4 July 2024.

253 Governance

The report presented the Association of College's (AoC) Further Education Code of Good Governance as recommended for adoption by the Search and Governance Committee. The report provided an update on Governing Board membership and a recommendation for a new member of the board.

The initial gap analysis against the new code has indicated that the College is compliant, with some areas for improvement. The adoption from 1 August 2024 will allow for an action plan to be completed and the external governance review to provide assurance against the code ahead of compliance being reported in the December 2025 financial statements.

The Search and Governance Committee provided an overview of the meeting with Tim Jones, the prospective new governor.

RESOLVED: **The Governing Board resolved to accept the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to adopt of the Association of College's Code of Good Governance 2023 from 1 August 2024.**

The Governing Board resolved to approve the appointment of Tim Jones as a member of the Governing Board.

The Governing Board noted the resignation of David Balsamo as a Governor of St Helens College.

254 Accountability Statement 2024/25 and Local Needs Duty

The report provided the Governing Board with the draft St Helens College 2024/25 Accountability Statement for consideration and approval. The report also briefly outlined progress against the actions set out in the 2023/24 Accountability Statement.

The Governing Board undertook a thorough review of curriculum in May 2023. A presentation was received on the changes to the curriculum since this review took place. The local skills need has not changed significantly since the review in May 2023. The number of students in Knowsley receiving 5 GCSEs continues to rise steadily. When planning the curriculum, the College considers both local skills areas which are a priority or growth sector, but also the requirement for the replacement of an aging workforce and skilling young people to take these jobs.

The College continues to offer a broad and deep 16-18 provision and is focusing on creating more progression opportunities to level 3 courses. Apprenticeships remain a key focus for meeting local skills needs, as the College looks to diversify the apprenticeship offer from construction and engineering and into higher level apprenticeships. The funding streams available to the College mean that the adult offer spans from employability courses for those with low or no skills, to community cohesion courses and professional bespoke skills training at employer requests.

The Governing Board discussed the aims and objectives listed in the Accountability Agreement as priorities for the College. The priorities listed link closely to the Local Skills Improvement Fund and the College is confident that these aims will be achieved. Developments will be made to the curriculum outside of these priorities as part of the curriculum planning process.

The Governing Board considered collaboration with other providers to ensure that there is not oversupply in certain curriculum areas. The College collaborates with local colleges through the Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges but is mindful of the competition posed by these providers and the College's ambition to grow student numbers.

Alison Cannon left the meeting briefly.

The Governing Board queried priority 6 (developing logistics partnerships) as the College has previously invested in logistics centres which have not successfully attracted students. There is a high level of demand for warehousing and distribution training, particularly at lower levels. This is primarily delivered offsite at distribution facilities, so the College intends to move away from having an onsite logistics centre to working with partners to provide bespoke training through employers. The College has delivered £200k of training through this model in 2023/24 and is predicting more delivery in this

area for 2024/25. The Parkside Freeport area will also drive the creation of jobs in this area.

The Governing Board questioned how the College will achieve growth at Knowsley. Level 3 groups are planned as progression opportunities where the College currently has level 2 provision. In 2024/25 there will be level 3 pathways for Catering, Performing Arts, Healthcare, Engineering, which will allow for progressions and direct entry. The College aims to attract more students to stay within the Knowsley borough for level 3 education and to offer pathways to level 3 for those students who may not achieve 5 GCSEs at school. The Governing Board queried how the College intends to encourage direct entry. Through the stakeholder engagement plan, the College is developing a community engagement plan within the Knowsley borough and plans to engage local stakeholders around the provision on offer. The opportunity to attract more students from east Liverpool will also be considered. The Governing Board reminded management of the requirement to make the Stockbridge Lane PFI building viable.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board resolved to approve the College's Accountability Statement for 2024/25.

The Governing Board noted the conclusions and outcomes of the ongoing review of how well the College meets local needs, including any actions to be taken.

The Governing Board noted progress against the 2023/24 Accountability Statement.

255 Environmental Sustainability Strategy Update

The report presented the College's draft Climate Action Road Map and Environmental Sustainability Action Plan for information and agreement.

The Deputy CEO gave a presentation detailing the actions the College is currently undertaking as an 'emerging college' and the ambition to be an 'established college'. The Governing Board supported the development of a steering group to direct the strands of activity and the inclusion of a Link Governor for Environmental Sustainability in this group. This group will help to balance the strands of activity to ensure that they are completed in a sensible order.

The Governing Board were pleased with the thorough plan for environmental sustainability but queried how the College will decide what the priority actions are. Some actions will have cost implications which will need to be considered as part of the capital budget and the steering group may find that some actions are not viable or achievable. The College will focus on small actions which may have a large impact, and measuring and reporting this impact so that staff and students can see the progress being made.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board resolved to agree the Climate Action Road Map and approve the College Environmental Sustainability Action Plan, subject to any comments and suggested amendments.

The Governing Board delegated regular oversight of the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan to the Finance, Resource and Commercial Committee with reporting to the Governing Board on an annual basis.

The Governing Board agreed the appointment of a Link Governor for Environmental Sustainability.

257 Corporate risk register

The Governing Board considered whether any of the discussions have resulted in changes to the risk register. No changes were suggested to the risk register.

The Audit Committee will be considering refining the risk register and providing a summary document to the Governing Board.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the corporate risk register.

261 Any other business

The Governing Board congratulated staff as the College has achieved the bronze status for the National Centre in Diversity's Investors in Diversity Award.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Board will be held on 4 July 2024 at 3.15pm.