

## St Helens College

### GOVERNING BOARD

#### **Notes from the meeting held at the Town Centre Campus, St Helens Thursday 25 May 2023 at 4.00pm**

<b>Present:</b>	Bill Nixon (Chair)	External Governor
	Phil Han	External Governor
	Adam Humphreys	Student Governor
	Kellie McCann	Student Governor
	Jen McGill	Staff Governor
	Alun Owen	External Governor
	Simon Pierce	Chief Executive/Principal
	Nick Shore	External Governor
	Tracey Turner	Staff Governor
<b>In attendance:</b>	Julia Callaghan	Director of Sales, Marketing & Customer Relations
	Gillian Hayhurst	Governance Director (minutes)
	Dr Kate Webb	The KWP Ltd (via Microsoft Teams)

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate as external governors were not in the majority. As the meeting involved external partners and no decisions were to be taken, it was agreed to continue in workshop format.

#### **143 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from John Heritage, Zulakha Desai, Liz Duncan, David Balsamo, Alison Cannon, Jim Pinsent and Andrew Lang.

#### **144 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

#### **145 Curriculum review**

The College commissioned an external review of curriculum to support a future triennial review and inform the development of an annual accountability statement. The review considers how the College is meeting local, regional and national skills need.

Governors were reminded of the context in which a triennial review of curriculum was required. The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 had created some additional duties to align provision with local needs.

The sector awaits secondary legislation relating to the Lifetime Loan Entitlement and minimum qualifications for further education teachers.

In addition to the curriculum review providing some evidence of the College's duty to review its curriculum, it would also be used to develop the Accountability Agreement. Most colleges have not undertaken their curriculum review, as they have been waiting for the publication of their Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) and guidance on collaborative activity required under the 2022 Act.

The board noted the projected increase in 16–18-year-olds over the next five years, which could see the number of students increase by 300. A discussion was held on the reasons for the College's reduction in 16–18-year-old students during the pandemic, which had been attributed to centre and teacher assessed grades. This reduction was in line with other colleges in the country.

The tight labour market, economic inactivity, a productivity gap and the impact of automation on manufacturing were considered. The government's commitment to net zero carbon may create new opportunities for a diverse curriculum.

Construction, health and social care and engineering are the focus in the region. The College currently has a smaller market share at level 3, but this may be linked to individuals taking an apprenticeship route. The College no longer offers A-level courses. Some careers only require level 2 qualifications to enter the labour market and with the cost-of-living crisis, more people are needing to work. This is evident in the reduction of adult learners in the sector.

Compared to national figures, the College recruits more students from deprived backgrounds, which is due to the geographical location and market that it serves. There may be further opportunity for growth, particularly as the Knowsley Borough closely borders the eastern border of the City of Liverpool, however competition and the requirement to travel will have an impact on these opportunities.

The board noted that the Office for National Statistics has not yet released data that shows the impact of Brexit and the pandemic. Current information suggests there is population growth but that the population is aging, resulting in economic inactivity. An increase in health issues is leading to more training required in health and social care, however these are often delivered as short courses.

Construction should offer the most opportunity for growth and the College is investing in more teaching space to increase provision for adult construction courses. With regard to apprenticeships, it was noted that some subjects, for example business administration, provides low levels of funding and therefore economies of scale are required for these courses to provide a financial contribution. It was noted that any requirements to partner under the 2022 Act should also consider competition law to ensure that the College remains compliant.

**Alun Owen joined the meeting.**

The board considered opportunities relating to renewables and net zero carbon and how the curriculum could be adapted to include these. There will be a need to upskill and develop the existing workforce in renewable energy sources. The College is focusing on growth in construction, motor vehicle repair, engineering and manufacturing, however the estate remains a limiting factor. The College is applying for grant funding to support its growth ambitions ,but the government is expecting local employers to provide some investment.

The College is lobbying for the development of a public services T-Level. Its most successful programmes are those with strong career links.

With regard to digitisation, the College performs well at entry level and is continuing to adapt its curriculum to ensure digital skills are included in all areas; adapting subjects to include a specific emphasis on sector requirements.

The College is also considering how it can package higher technical qualifications as apprenticeships so organisations can make the most of the apprenticeship levy. There are strategic opportunities in health and social care, however a regional system is required to respond to the need for industry placements. The board considered the national challenges with recruiting into the health and social care sector. The Health Innovation Hub may provide opportunities to market the wide range of careers available in the sector.

Strategic consideration is needed in developing a professional construction offer beyond level 3. The board noted that there was little reference in the review to artificial intelligence, despite global developments in this area. The curriculum could be developed to include elements of artificial intelligence, such as automated telephone systems, algorithms and virtual triage.

Following the discussion, a final version of the curriculum review will be provided. The draft accountability agreement will be sent to the Education and Skills Funding Agency by the 31 May 2023 deadline. The board will consider the final version of the agreement at its meeting in July 2023. The curriculum review will be used to feed into strategic discussions on delivery of the adult education budget, medium-term curriculum planning and a review of the estates strategy. The College will also need to consider its partnership and stakeholder engagement strategy once the LSIP has been published.

**Phil Han left the meeting.**

**RESOLVED: Members discussed the findings of the draft Curriculum Review and noted that the final report will inform the development of the College’s Accountability Agreement, which will be presented to the Governing Board in July 2023.**

#### 146 Any other business

There were no items of any other business.

#### Date of next meeting

Termly performance meeting – 6 July 2023

